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Refugee Reports

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FROM KILLING TIME TO THE KILLING FIELDS?: CAMBODIAN REFUGEES FEAR FORCED REPATRIATION

Despite the failure of the four rival Cambodian factions to achieve any political compromise at a Paris international conference held in August, they did manage to agree on at least one thing: that the 306,000 Cambodian refugees and displaced persons now in Thailand should be allowed to return home safely and voluntarily in the event that a comprehensive political settlement can be reached.

But the collapse of the Paris conference leaves that prospect in real doubt. And with the withdrawal in late September of what Vietnam asserts to be the last of its 26,000 remaining troops in Cambodia, the country leans into the abyss of a bloody civil war. Cambodian resistance leaders insist that the camp populations will be left in place. But--noting that forced repatriations have already occurred in the past--relief workers on the Thai-Cambodian border, and refugees themselves, are expressing fears that people could be moved back, against their will, to support the resistance effort and establish territorial control by rival factions inside Cambodia.

In a letter sent to Refugee Reports, a Cambodian on the border said, "It is possible that the forcing repatriation may happen to us, because each faction seems to want to have power, they have to have people with them, and in order to have people with them, they may force the people to go with them to Cambodia so that they can use them for their own purposes."

The letter, which was unsigned but declared itself the "voice of innocent refugees who are living in all camps along the Khmer-Thai border," said that until safe and voluntary return was possible, "we want to stay in a transit camp which is completely neutral and controlled by no faction, but probably by UNHCR [UN High Commissioner for Refugees] or other international organizations."

It is not enough, some aid officials say, to prevent forced repatriation. Until Cambodians can return home in safety, they say, a way must be found to protect life and sanity in the dangerous and desperate border camps.

"These are not the killing fields," wrote British

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novelist Margaret Drabble after a visit to the largest Cambodian camp, Site 2; "these are the fields of killing time. They breed violence, rape (of children, too, increasingly), robbery, extortion, banditry, depression, psychosis, suicide--but what else would you expect in a city with no real employment and no prospects?"

Forced Return is Common in the Khmer Rouge Camps Nearly 73,000 Cambodians in Thailand live in camps controlled by the Khmer Rouge, responsible for the deaths of more than one million people from 1975 until it was driven from power by invading Vietnamese troops in December 1978. For the Khmer Rouge camp residents--many aid workers say "prisoners" is a more accurate term--forced relocations have been commonplace.

Between June 1988 and July 1989, Khmer Rouge leadership are believed to have moved at least 23,000 people from UN-assisted camps to sites along what has been called the "hidden border," where an estimated 50,000 people live in Khmer Rouge satellite villages and military camps beyond the reach of international or private relief groups.

In August, refugees and aid officials reported that 2,000 people living in Site K had returned to Khmer Rouge military bases. Established in April, Site K is one of four Khmer Rouge camps in Thailand to which relief agencies have been given access. The other camps are Site 8, Bo Rai, and O'Trao.

The population of Site K, at one point as high as 12,000, stood at 8,900 at the end of September. "All evidence indicates there is some forced removal and even at gunpoint," an official told Agence France-Presse. One refugee at Site K said, "Those who go back go to do their duty. But everyone wants to stay here."

In the camps controlled by the two non-communist resistance factions, forced relocations have not been a problem so far, according to relief workers, but many worry for the future. In Site 2, which is run by the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), military ranks reportedly have been assigned to key civilians in the camp, including medics, construction workers, and engineers, pending a transfer to guerrilla bases in Cambodia.

Farther to the north, at Site B, run by supporters of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, about 600 Cambodian secondary school students, most of them around 18 years old, were sent off on August 22 to a secret military base for 35 days of training.

"The civilians are the only power base they have; they will hold on to them," a relief official told The Independent, a London newspaper. "Paris was their last chance. Now all they can do is fight for territory."

Kun Kim Teng, deputy administrator of Site B, insisted that the students were away on a "boy scout camping trip." He said, "This is no such thing as mobilization of forces. The boys will definitely come back to school as soon as their vacation ends." He said that the training course includes concentration on "agriculture", "political indoctrination", and "some basic military skills."

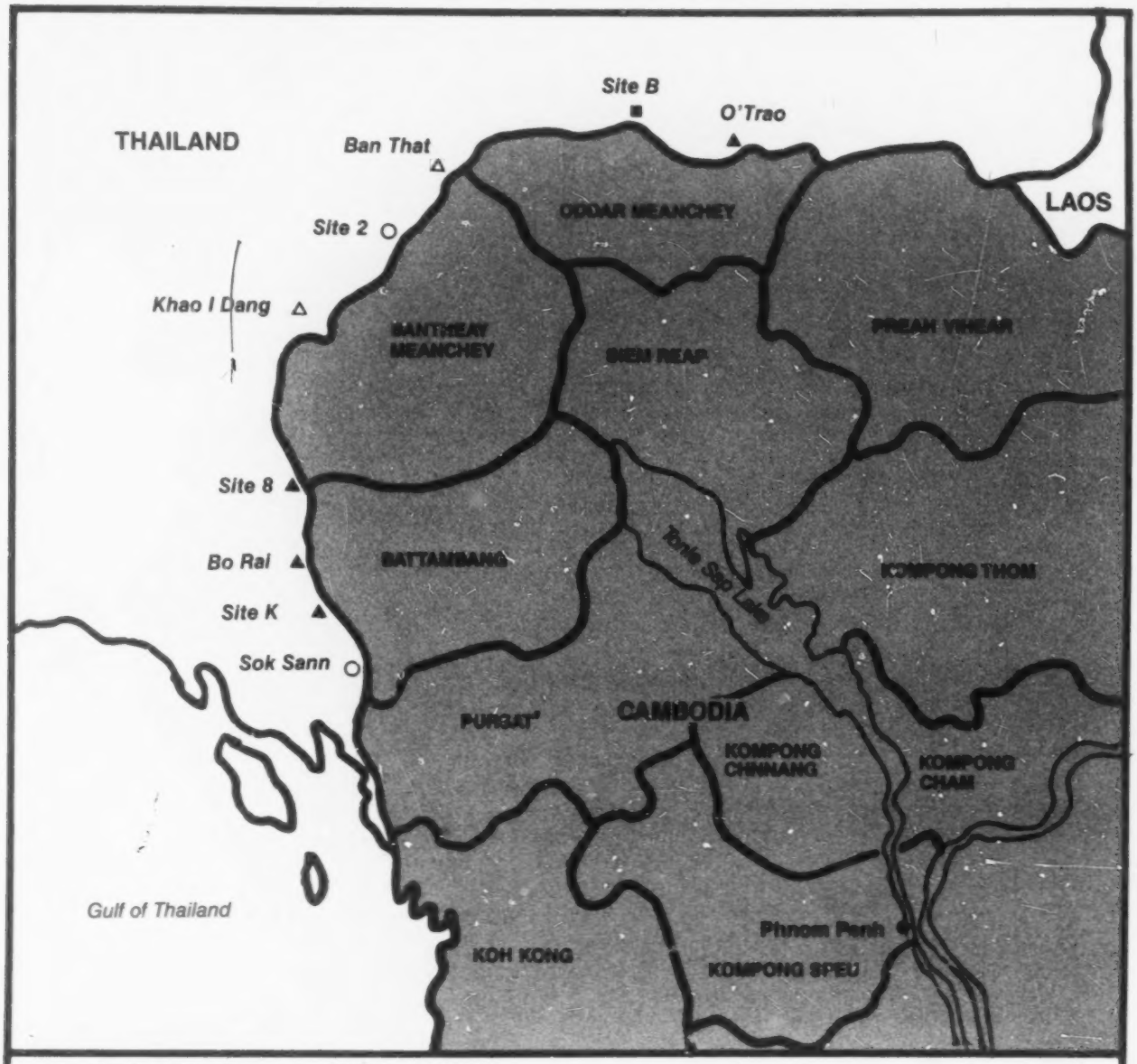
On August 31, the KPNLF issued a statement to the press, denying any plans to move its civilian population into Cambodia until a comprehensive political settlement is reached.

UNHCR Will Be On The Border To Coordinate Repatriation According to several recent press accounts, responsibility for the Cambodian border camps will be transferred from the UN Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) to UNHCR, which has been designated by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar as the lead agency for the repatriation program.

UNBRO was established in 1982 to assist displaced Cambodians at the border. With a 1989 operating budget of $59.6 million, the agency is responsible for providing food, shelter, health care, sanitation, elementary education, and technical skills training for the currently 291,000 Cambodians designated as "displaced persons" in Thailand.

UNHCR officials have confirmed that the transfer of administrative responsibilities will take place, but declined to say when. "The timing will depend primarily on political developments in Cambodia," one official told Refugee Reports, and cautioned that the UNHCR role on the border should be seen strictly in terms of repatriation, rather than its possible impact on asylum conditions in Thailand or prospects for resettlement in other countries. "We do not want to get anyone's hopes up that a UNHCR presence would offer substantial new options to people on the border," other than a safe

Refugee Camps on the Thai-Cambodian Border



Cambodian refugee camps, under the control of:

- ▲ Khmer Rouge
- ○ Khmer People's National Liberation Front (Son Sann)
- ■ Prince Sihanouk's group
- △ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Camp populations, September 1989, total about 305,900.

SITE 2	143,956	SITE B	63,747	KHAO I DANG	11,672
Dong Ruk	19,139	SITE 8	41,384	SITE K	8,944
San Ro	10,744	O'TRAO	18,164	BAN THAT	
Ban Sangae	24,771	SOK SANN	10,383	Khmer	3,207
Nong Chan	22,379	BO RAI	4,443	Vietnamese	224
Samet	66,747				

Sources: United Nations Border Relief Operation

Cambodian civilians who fled to Thailand on July 24, after two days of Vietnamese-Cambodia army shelling against their Site 8 refugee camp. The Khmer Rouge camp, which housed nearly 36,000 people, was temporarily evacuated. Photo Credit: Associated Press

return home, the official said.

In the meantime, numerous international and private relief organizations are initiating projects at the border and inside Cambodia to assist in repatriation and reintegration efforts.

S.A.M.S. Kibria, special representative of the UN Secretary-General for coordination of Cambodian humanitarian assistance programs, told a multilateral donors' meeting on September 13 in New York that the Ford Foundation has funded a study to determine the original home areas of Cambodians on the border. UNHCR is assessing the capacity of selected Cambodian provinces to absorb the returnees. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is planning to expand its family tracing service inside Cambodia. New vocational skills-training programs are being implemented in the border camps, Kibria said.

But international aid and protection are threatened if forced repatriation occurs, Kibria suggested. "I hope you will agree with me that any movement of the population into Cambodia which lacks the assurance of safety and freedom of choice cannot be supported," he said in his speech to the donors. "Indeed, it would make it extremely difficult and perhaps impossible for us to continue our material assistance to the population or extend the necessary protection to them."

The statement on repatriation agreed to by the Paris conference participants specified that "repatriation of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons should be voluntary and taken in full possession of the facts. Choice of destination within Cambodia should be that of the individual. The unity of the family must be preserved."

Spontaneous Repatriation Also Occurs

Although reliable figures are hard to come by, relief officials feel sure that large numbers of border Cambodians have been returning home on their own in the past year. On July 4, UNBRO completed a census of Site 2, and determined that the actual population in the camp was 140,000. The pre-count

STATEMENT ON REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS ADOPTED BY THE PARIS CONFERENCE ON CAMBODIA

Introduction

1. Once a comprehensive political settlement has been achieved, every assistance will need to be given to Cambodian refugees and displaced persons as well as to countries of temporary refuge and the country of origin in order to facilitate the voluntary return of all Cambodian refugees and displaced perons in a peaceful and orderly manner. It must also be ensured that there would be no residual problems for the countries of temporary refuge. The country of origin with responsibility towards its own people will accept their return as conditions become conducive.

Conditions Conducive to the Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons

2. The task of rebuilding the Cambodian nation will require the harnessing of all its human and natural resources, and to this end, the return of Cambodians from their temporary refuge and elsewhere outside their country of origin will make a major contribution.

3. The mass repatriation of the Cambodian refugees and displaced persons can only take place in the context of a comprehensive political settlement. It will be important that any such settlement be in terms which they will find conducive to their return, namely in safety, security and dignity.

4. A comprehensive political settlement will, inter alia, ensure that the conditions which have led to a large number of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons seeking refuge in other countries should not recur. Nevertheless, some Cambodian refugees and displaced persons will wish and be able to return spontaneously to their homeland.

5. There must be full respect for the fundamental human rights of all Cambodians, including those of the repatriated refugees and displaced persons, in recognition of their entitlement to live in peace and security, free from intimidation and coercion of any kind. These rights would include, inter alia, freedom of movement within Cambodia, the choice of domicile and employment, and the right to property.

6. Following the comprehensive political settlement every effort should be made to create concurrently in Cambodia political, economic and social conditions conducive to the return and harmonious integration of the Cambodian refugees and displaced persons.

7. With a view to ensuring that refugees and displaced persons participate in free and fair elections under international supervision, mass repatriation should commence and be completed as soon as possible after a comprehensive political settlement, taking into account all the political, humanitarian, logistical, technical and socio-economic factors involved, and with the cooperation of the quadripartite interim authority.

8. Repatriation of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons should be voluntary and taken in full possession of the facts. Choice of destination within Cambodia should be that of the individual. The unity of the family must be preserved.

9. Consistent with respect for principles of national sovereignty in the countries of temporary refuge and origin, and in close cooperation with the countries of temporary refuge and origin, full access by UNHCR, ICRC and other relevant international agencies should be guaranteed to all Cambodian refugees and displaced persons, with a view to the agencies undertaking the census, tracing, medical assistance, food distribution and other activities vital to the discharge of their mandate and operational responsibilities; such access should also be provided in Cambodia to enable the relevant international organizations to carry out their traditional monitoring as well as operational responsibilities.

10. In the context of the comprehensive political settlement, the committee noted with satisfaction that the secretary-general of the United Nations has entrusted UNHCR with the role of leadership and coordination among intergovernmental agencies assisting with the repatriation and relief of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons. It also took note of the specific requirements for the planning and various operational phases of the repatriation as outlined in the report of the secretary-general of the United Nations in document CPC/89/C.3/COM.1. The committee looked to all non-governmental organizations to coordinate as much as possible their work for the Cambodian refugees and displaced persons with that of UNHCR.

11. After the comprehensive political settlement the quadripartite interim authority, the governments of the countries in which the Cambodian refugees and displaced persons have sought temporary refuge and the countries which contributed to the repatriation and integration effort will wish to monitor closely and facilitate the repatriation of the returnees. An ad hoc consultative body should be established for a limited term for these purposes. The UNHCR, the ICRC, the international control mechanism and other international agencies as appropriate would be invited to join as full participants.

12. Adequately monitored short term repatriation assistance should be provided on an impartial basis to enable the families and individuals returning to Cambodia to establish their lives and livelihoods harmoniously in their society. These interim measures would be phased out and replaced in the longer term by the reconstruction program.

13. Those responsible for organizing and supervising the repatriation operation will need to ensure that conditions of security are created for the movement of the refugees and displaced persons. In this respect, it is imperative that appropriate border crossing points and routes be designated and cleared of mines and other hazards.

14. The international community should contribute generously to the financial requirements of the repatriation operation.

estimate was 180,000. An UNBRO official attributed the decrease to a combination of factors: more accurate census-taking techniques and departures to Cambodia.

One relief worker estimated that up to 5,000 people left Site 2 in April and May, despite the dangers of landmines and attack by soldiers or bandits. "It has never happened before to such an extent," he told The Washington Post. "And there are still people leaving, much more than before."

The Cambodian police force in Site 2 reportedly has tried to stop the outflow, since it undermines the resistance factions' claim that morale in the camps remains high.

Administration's Cambodia Policies Challenged by Congress In the wake of a Vietnamese withdrawal and in the face of an all-out civil war that could well be won by the Khmer Rouge, a number of congressmen are calling for a reassessment of U.S. policy on Cambodia. That policy, as articulated by Secretary of State James Baker at the Paris conference, states on the one hand, "The United States strongly believes that the Khmer Rouge should play no role in Cambodia's future," and on the other hand, "We are prepared, however, to support Prince Sihanouk should he deem it necessary to accept the inclusion of all Khmer factions in an interim coalition."

The Bush Administration, moreover, has proposed giving lethal aid to the noncommunist resistance factions, despite their political and military alliance with the Khmer Rouge in the tripartite Coalition Government for Democratic Kampuchea.

"That policy," said Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Cal.) at a Senate Asia subcommittee hearing on October 2, "wobbles like Jello. What end is served by American support for a civil war in Cambodia? Do we give guns to Sihanouk so he can combine forces with Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge in attacking Phnom Penh?"

At a House Asia subcommittee hearing two weeks earlier, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Richard H. Solomon called Sihanouk "our horse." "Perhaps he is our horse," said Cranston. "Perhaps we just think he is our horse. He certainly isn't the only one, nor the only means to an end."

Solomon had offered two questions of his own: "Should the Khmer Rouge, responsible for genocidal violence of the 1970s, be totally excluded from the political process with only a military option? Or should it--less its top leadership--be given a limited stake in a transitional political coalition that would, under international supervision," submit to free and fair elections in Cambodia?

Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) said there is a "way out of the Cambodian maze. It requires a shotgun marriage between Hun Sen [the Vietnamese-backed prime minister of Cambodia] and Sihanouk." The United States "should make it clear to Sihanouk that he must break with the Khmer Rouge and strike a separate deal with Hun Sen." In return, the United States and its Southeast Asian allies should provide sufficient lethal and nonlethal aid for the noncommunist resistance to stand up to a Khmer Rouge assault, according to Murkowski.

Hun Sen and the noncommunists together "can establish a viable government in Phnom Penh with the political credibility, the military strength, and the international support to cope with the Khmer Rouge," Murkowski said.

But as the talk, or the silence, drags on, the civil war has begun, said Dith Pran, New York Times photographer and focus of "The Killing Fields." "All armies are pressing underage youths into their armies," he said in Senate testimony. "All sides are sending their troops to crush the enemy--which are all Cambodians. Cambodians are being forced by their leaders to go to the killing fields again."

Recent Developments

HOUSE TO MERGE SAFE HAVEN BILLS FOR CHINESE AND CENTRAL AMERICANS

The House Rules Committee will merge two major, controversial bills granting temporary safe haven prior to a vote on the House floor, according to knowledgeable congressional sources.

The bills, H.R. 45, commonly known as the Moakley-DeConcini bill, which would offer temporary safe haven to nationals of El Salvador and Nicaragua, and H.R. 2929, which would offer similar protection to Chinese nationals, will become one bill, retaining the number H.R. 45.

Rep. Bruce A. Morrison (D-Conn.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law, had earlier amended H.R. 45 to include more generic language outlining the criteria to be used in granting temporary protected status (see Refugee Reports, Vol. X, No. 6) and had introduced H.R. 2929 with the stated intent of providing a "framework for the future" for other nationalities similarly situated (see Refugee Reports, Vol X, No. 7).

Sources say that the new bill will include the three nationalities; a three-year period of temporary protected status; work authorization; and the requirement of a General Accounting Office study to assess the status of these nationalities in the United States and their conditions and circumstances upon return.

The Rules Committee will decline to include Lebanese nationals in the bill, although a similar measure has been introduced on their behalf (see following story), according to sources. Members of Congress have agreed to look more closely at their situation, to determine how many have been turned down for case-by-case "extended voluntary departure."

H.R. 45 is expected to reach the House floor on October 25.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that about 60 percent of the 500,000 to one million Salvadorans and Nicaraguans in the United States would choose to register with the INS for temporary protected status. Other sources have estimated that 75,000 to 100,000 Chinese nationals could potentially benefit from H.R. 2929, although most Chinese--including about 40,000 students--are thought currently to have valid nonimmigrant visas.

Nicaraguan Exile Support Gives Bill Added Boost The Moakley/DeConcini bill has been given an added boost recently by the Nicaraguan exile community, which heretofore has been, at best, lukewarm in its support of the measure.

Contra leader Adolfo Calero, standing alongside the bill's liberal author, Rep. Joe Moakley (D-Mass.), endorsed the bill at a Washington press conference in early October. In September, Miami Mayor Xavier Suarez also joined a group of Nicaraguan exile leaders to endorse the bill.

On September 9, the leaders of 14 Nicaraguan exile organizations sent a letter to Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) urging him to support the bill and criticizing the Administration for a "disjointed" policy towards Nicaraguans seeking asylum.

Congressional sources told Refugee Reports that the endorsement by the Nicaraguan community is likely to reverse earlier opposition to the bill from key conservatives in the House. The Bush Administration, however, remains opposed to the bill.

Senate Judiciary Committee to Consider Amendments of Central American Safe Haven Measure On the Senate side, Judiciary Committee business has been bogged down for weeks because of the demand of Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-Wyo.) for a quorum to hear his views on the DeConcini version of the safe haven bill for Salvadorans and Nicaraguans, S. 458.

At one session, on September 28, Simpson said, "I promised to allow this bill to come forward without a filibuster and this is not a filibuster." However, his demand for the presence of every member of the Judiciary Commitee, the length of his remarks, and six amendments have had the effect of holding up action for weeks.

Simpson's opposition centers on what he terms "two main flaws"--1) that the bill provides a "blanket approach" as opposed to case-by-case determination; and 2) that it is "country specific."

"I object to a blanket status for every Salvadoran and Nicaraguan in the United States regardless of their reasons for being here," he said. The bill would "undercut the Refugee Act of 1980," he said, because it would designate specific countries and cover nationality groups on a blanket basis.

He also expressed the view that "conditions in El Salvador do not warrant" protected status. "Every year that passes, the justification for this bill gets weaker and weaker," Simpson said.

Simpson Introduces Six Amendments On October 26, the Judiciary Committee is expected to consider Simpson's six amendments to the bill. Among other things, the amendments would:

* require the Attorney General to establish "standard profiles" of nationals of El Salvador and Nicaragua who might

be subject to adverse treatment because of their "particular associations or individual activities" and to grant 12 month EVD to those who qualify under the standard profiles;

° prevent the consideration of any bills to adjust the status of aliens receiving temporary protected status;

° and, provide a cut-off date of January 1, 1989 for eligibility for protected status.

TEMPORARY SAFE HAVEN FOR LEBANESE PROPOSED

On September 13, Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio) introduced a bill, H.R. 3267, that would provide temporary protected status for Lebanese nationals in the United States.

Under The Lebanese Temporary Protected Status Act of 1989, Lebanese nationals currently residing in the United States would be allowed to remain for the next two years and would be authorized to work during that time. After two years, the Attorney General would review whether to continue to offer Lebanese nationals extended voluntary departure (EVD) every six months.

In 1976, shortly after the start of the civil war in Lebanon, the Immigration and Naturalization Service issued a directive saying: "In view of the continuing civil strife in Lebanon, INS officers, on a case-by-case basis, should view sympathetically requests for extended voluntary departure received from nationals of Lebanon in the United States who have overstayed, where such requests are based upon compelling humanitarian need." The INS policy statement said, however, that "there is no blanket policy to grant extended voluntary departure in these cases."

In a letter to former U.S. Senator James Abourezk, then-INS Commissioner Alan C. Nelson told him that he would reissue the 1976 directive, but said that, after reviewing the policy, blanket EVD would still not be extended "because of the highly adverse immigration effects of a blanket grant."

Oakar said, "The implementation of this policy is largely at the discretion of the regional INS office and the treatment of this case depends on how sympathetically an individual's case is reviewed by that office." She said that although district directors have the authority to grant EVD for periods up to a year, that such cases are rare.

"In addition," she said, "this program is underutilized because of a deliberate lack of publicity."

"It is very rare for Lebanese to be granted EVD on an individual basis," said Andrew Ansara, director of the Immigration Services Center of the International Institute of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Ansara, himself of Lebanese background, said that asylum is also rarely granted to Lebanese. Only seven percent of Lebanese asylum applicants have had their cases granted from 1983 through 1988.

"People coming over now are telling of terrible events, living in bomb shelters," said Ansara, "and many of those already here have lost their homes and have nothing to go back to."

Simon Horness, the director of international student services at the University of Arizona, told Refugee Reports that "quite a few" Lebanese students emigrate to Canada rather than return home.

The majority however do return home, which is a condition of their J-1 visa status. "Lebanon is not very stable right now," said Horness, who suggested that the two-year, home-country residency requirement of the J-1 visa should be expanded to allow placement elsewhere in the Middle East.

Whatever options Lebanese students choose, said Horness, he favors a blanket EVD policy because "I would like these young men and women to have a choice."

"To stay here [temporarily while conditions in Lebanon are unsettled] doesn't mean they will abandon their country," Horness said.

H.R. 3267 is before the House Judiciary Committee. The Rules Committee declined to add Lebanese to temporary safe haven bills on behalf of Chinese (H.R. 2929) and Central Americans (H.R. 45) that were being merged together (see previous story).

SUIT STANDS CHARGING BIAS AGAINST SALVADORANS AND GUATEMALANS ON ASYLUM AND EVD

American Baptist Church v. Thornburgh, a lawsuit that began in 1985 charging the United States with discriminatory treatment

towards Salvadoran and Guatemalan asylum seekers, moved a step forward on September 11 when a federal judge in San Francisco rejected government arguments to dismiss the claim.

U.S. District Judge Robert Peckham also rejected the government's call for summary judgment on the charge of discriminatory application of extended voluntary departure (EVD), the Attorney General's power to withhold deportation for nationals based on dangerous conditions in their home countries.

Marc Van Der Hout, an attorney with the National Lawyers Guild representing the class of Salvadorans and Guatemalans who have unsuccessfully applied for asylum and been denied EVD, called the decision "extremely important."

He said, "We will finally be able to go to trial on the major issue in this case--the fact that Salvadorans and Guatemalans have been denied asylum for political reasons--rather than on the strength of their cases."

The government moved to dismiss the claim that discrimination in adjudicating asylum claims violates the Fifth Amendment right of persons from El Salvador and Guatemala to equal protection of the law because the relief sought would require "supervising the reprocessing of thousands of applications."

The judge found the government's argument "unpersuasive," saying, "The plaintiffs seek an order that defendants prepare a plan guaranteeing fair adjudication. Such relief does not raise the specter of detailed supervision of individual adjudications."

Judge Refuses Summary Judgment on EVD The government provided the court with several letters from high-ranking government officials to members of Congress explaining why EVD was not being granted to Salvadorans and Guatemalans. Those reasons included the fear that such a grant would encourage a floodtide of illegal immigrants, that civil strife was not prevalent throughout El Salvador, that conditions in Guatemala were improving, and that current asylum procedures provide relief for deserving aliens.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs pointed out that the letters were between four and six years old and were not intended for use in a court of law. The judge agreed, saying, "The letters are not sworn declarations and were offered in an explicitly political setting."

Peckham rejected the government's call for summary judgment on the EVD claim, saying that "plaintiffs deserve the opportunity for at least limited discovery before their claims are weighed in the summary judgment motion."

This means that the plaintiffs' lawyers will be able to obtain copies of the government's records and to question government officials about the INS's assertion that the decision to deny EVD for Salvadorans and Guatemalans was not politically motivated and that these nationalities were not treated differently from other nationalities in making the decision.

The judge did side with the government, however, in dismissing a constitutional tort claim based on the plaintiffs' argument that the government's return of refugees to El Salvador and Guatemala places them "in jeopardy of grave harm, including death, serious physical injury, or emotional harm."

Basing its reasoning on a recent Supreme Court decision, Schweiker v. Chilicky, the judge said that when Congress enacts any type of relief--even when it does not redress constitutional infringements--constitutional tort action does not arise.

"The effect of this case in the long term could have tremendous significance," Van Der Hout said, "for the INS will finally be made to comply with Congress's intent when it passed the 1980 Refugee Act to treat all asylum applicants the same no matter what country they come from."

THREAT OF FAMINE RETURNS TO HORN OF AFRICA

Once again, people in Eritrea, Tigray, and southern Sudan face the threat of famine. In Eritrea, according to the Eritrean Relief Committee (ERC), a recent drought has caused major crop failures, exacerbating existing food shortages. In southern Sudan, the threat of renewed fighting also raises fears that famine may return to the area.

In Eritrea, Existing Problems Exacerbated Before the drought, an estimated 612,000 people in areas held by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) were already receiving food aid. Now, according to the ERC, more than 1.9 million through-

out Eritrea are affected by the drought and in need of food aid--1.5 million of them in areas held by the EPLF or in conflict zones that cannot be reached through Ethiopian government channels.

The ERC has issued an urgent alert, asking donors for additional food aid. "The tremendous increase in need has to be brought to the immediate attention of the international community," says ERC's Karen Hauser. According to the World Food Program, food stocks in Eritrea are expected to be exhausted by early 1990, and the food pipeline is virtually empty for the first time since 1984. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, has also appealed to its national committees for extra aid to Eritrea. According to Hauser, an urgent donor response is needed if a major catastrophe is to be avoided.

The situation may be just as serious in Tigray, virtually all of which is under the control of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, because of the difficulty in reaching those in need.

Threat of Renewed Conflict and Famine in Southern Sudan There is a strong possibility that the current cease-fire between Sudanese government troops and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) may break down, leading to resumed fighting in southern Sudan. According to John Pendergast, research associate at Washington's Center of Concern, who has recently visited the area, that could trigger another catastrophic famine in southern Sudan.

In 1988, the disruption of food production and distribution caused by the fighting led to the deaths of an estimated 250,000 people, but an agreement between both parties in the conflict and the United Nations led to the creation of Operation Lifeline, an emergency relief effort that claims to have moved over 100,000 tons of food into affected areas this year and saved the lives of countless southern Sudanese. According to Roger Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, "The parties to the conflict have yet to find grounds for compromise, and that raises the possibility that the conflict may be renewed. If that happens, there may be widespread civilian deaths, and an increase in the number of refugees."

PROBLEMS FACED BY AFRICAN AND HAITIAN REFUGEES DISCUSSED AT WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

More than 160 participants from around the country met in Washington, D.C. in September to examine issues concerning African and Haitian refugees and displaced persons. The conference was sponsored by a consortium of five agencies and organized by the National Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Forum.

The conference opened with comments from Ambassador Jewel Lafontant, U.S. coordinator for refugee affairs, who focused on key aspects of U.S. policy towards African and Haitian refugees. Regarding Africa, Lafontant told the conference that "the cornerstone of our strategy must be to support the generosity of first asylum; to help defray the expenses of protecting and caring for the basic needs of refugees...[and] to help refugees return home if situations will permit."

On Haiti, Lafontant said that an article in a Hong Kong newspaper had raised a question for her about Haiti. The article noted that while the United States was adamant that Hong Kong should not repatriate or deport Vietnamese, it did not apply the same standards to Haitians. "If true," Lafontant said, "If we do have a policy of 'do as I say but not as I do,' if our deeds do not match our words, then it would tend to undercut our policy.... With a good Haitian name like Lafontant, I am interested and have already started to look into it."

Over One-Third of the World's Refugees Are African In the conference's first panel, Roger Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, explained that the complexity and severity of problems faced by African refugees, who represent one-third of the world's refugees, is not adequately recognized. This is partly because many refugees, including those who are internally displaced, are "hidden." Among the hidden refugees, Winter cited the 30,000 Somalis in Djibouti, who do not benefit from UNHCR protection and assistance because Djibouti does not recognize them as refugees.

The problems faced by internally displaced persons were also raised by Lance Clark, staff associate at the Refugee Policy Group. Clark said that, in Africa, there are many more internal refugees than there are international ones. However, he added,

"Unlike for international refugees, there is no international system in place to assist and protect internal refugees." The failure to recognize their existence and their suffering, he added, "prevents the build-up of outrage that is required to make the changes that are called for."

More Than 20,000 Haitians Interdicted at Sea--Only Six Allowed to Enter the U.S. Jocelyn McCalla, executive director of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, reminded the participants that refugees should not be considered in terms of mere numbers and faceless masses of people. "Keep in mind that refugees are individuals," McCalla said, "Individuals with hopes and aspirations" McCalla noted that out of 20,000 Haitian boat people who have been interdicted by the United States at sea, only six have been permitted to enter the United States to pursue asylum claims. "No other group has been singled out for such harsh treatment by the U.S.," McCalla told participants.

Black Refugees, U.S. Immigration Policies, and the Black Community In a keynote speech to the participants, Congressman Bruce A. Morrison (D-Conn.) also spoke on racism in refugee and immigration policies. "The perpetuation of racism after slavery is a stain in American history, and we need to work hard to remove racist elements in U.S. immigration policies," Morrison told participants. "Because of right-wing discrimination against blacks," Morrison added, "Eyes are closed to the persecution Haitians face in their country."

Along similar lines, Arthur Helton, of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, said, "Race has always been a component in U.S. immigration policy." Dr. Erku Yimer, executive director of the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, added, "The small percentage of refugee admissions from Africa clearly shows the lack of commitment and fairness in the application of its [the United States'] admission policies."

Dr. Sulayman Nyang, director of African studies at Howard University, said, "In the black community, the lack of interest in refugee affairs is due to the present condition of the average African-American... [who] sees the refugee problem as an extraneous issue that does not deserve his attention." To tackle this problem, Dr. Nyang added, "Greater efforts at sensitization must be undertaken." Dr. Calvin Rolark, president of the United Black Fund, argued how important it is for black immigrants, refugees, and exiles to make their case to the black community here. "If the black community in the U.S. and black refugees do not take the lead on these issues," Rolark said, "No one will."

At the end of the conference, participants and speakers alike urged that visibility be given to the issues raised at the conference. Participants called for the building of a support network to accomplish changes, and encouraged the participation of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Update

° September has brought new flows of boats out of Haiti. On August 31, 72 people were interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard and returned to Haiti on September 1. Several days later, another boat carrying 185 was interdicted and its passengers returned.

On September 14, the Coast Guard interdicted a sailboat carrying 103 Haitians, but was prevented from boarding it for a day, as the passengers protested their return. On September 21, another boat carrying 135 people was interdicted.

All 495 Haitians were returned to Haiti, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

The total number of Haitians interdicted in FY 89 stands at 4,551. Since the beginning of the interdiction program in 1981, 21,369 Haitians have been interdicted, according to the INS. Of that number, the INS says, only 6 persons have been allowed to enter the United States for the purpose of pursuing asylum claims.

On August 31, the Miami Herald cited Bruce Brown of the U.S. Information Service in Haiti as saying that U.S. embassy personnel in Port-au-Prince have begun helping Haitian authorities to inspect travel documents of those seeking to leave Haiti by air.

° A total of 346 Cubans have entered the United States by boat or raft so far this

year, according to the October 19 Miami Herald. An INS spokesman in Miami was not able to confirm that figure. He told Refugee Reports that the Cubans are initially taken to the Krome Avenue detention facility where they are examined by Public Health officials. They are then processed for exclusion proceedings and released on parole into the Miami community. Normally, no bond is posted. The INS spokesman said that the Cubans generally apply for asylum in the course of exclusion proceedings and that "the overwhelming majority" are granted asylum.

Feature

FEAR AND HOPE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

[Refugee Reports staff writer Hiram A. Ruiz recently returned from a five week fact-finding trip to southern Africa. Although refugees continue to flee violent conflicts in that region, tentative moves towards peace have also raised some hope. This account, which focuses on Mozambique and Mozambican refugees, is based on an upcoming U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) report on refugees in southern Africa.]

In Mozambique, despite the fact that the government and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) have agreed to talk about peace, fighting continues. More than 100,000 Mozambicans are said to have died as a result of the conflict; countless thousands of children have been orphaned, separated from their families, or kidnapped by RENAMO. An estimated 1.7 million Mozambicans are internally displaced, another 2.9 million are "affected" and at least partially dependent on food aid, and 1.2 million Mozambicans have fled to neighboring countries. Many of the country's schools, hospitals, and other public buildings have been destroyed.

USCR witnessed first-hand some of the devastation caused by RENAMO, and talked to many of its victims. In Tete province, one man explained how RENAMO attacked his village, rounded up the inhabitants, then--in front of all the assembled villagers--cut off both his ears and part of his upper lip, slashed both of his children in the back with axes, then sent him and his family off to the Mozambican authorities with a letter advising them that RENAMO had taken control of the village.

Newly arrived refugee children in Nsanje district, Malawi. Refugees often arrive without any clothes. Women wrap themselves in blankets that are issued to them at the camp; girls use empty food sacks as dresses. Although many of the newly arrived refugees that USCR observed appeared to be in reasonably good health, some of the children had distended stomachs. Photo credit: USCR/H. Ruiz

Living in Fear The lack of security engendered by the conflict permeates every aspect of Mozambican life. Many people are unable to work in their fields because the

government cannot guarantee them protection from RENAMO attack. Delivery of food to remote villages and to centers for the internally displaced is made difficult because roads are mined, and convoys of trucks carrying food must have military escorts to deter RENAMO attacks. Throughout much of the country, people live with the fear that they--or their children--might be kidnapped, killed, or maimed.

Every day, the Mozambican press cites the latest RENAMO attacks. During our site visit to Mozambique, there were many examples of this: 6 killed and 15 kidnapped at Doeroi; 14 killed and 20 kidnapped at Massingir and Macia; 1 killed and 40 houses burned at Mabalane; and 11 killed and a number of women and children abducted in Boane district, just 30 kilometers from Maputo.

Mixed Response From Asylum Countries

Mozambicans who have fled to neighboring countries have generally fared better, but even so have met quite different receptions depending on where they fled. In Zambia, where the situation for Mozambican refugees is perhaps the best, the government has given them land on which to grow their own food, and many are self-sufficient. In Zimbabwe, where land and security are politically sensitive issues, refugees are not given land and are forbidden to work. Many are living in crowded, fenced-in refugee camps.

Malawi has generally welcomed the refugees, but the scale of the influx--in some areas refugees outnumber Malawians by three to two--represents an overwhelming burden for the country. USCR was present in Nsanje district only days after the arrival of a new group of refugees. Many had come without any clothes. Women wore blankets that had been issued to them upon arrival, girls used empty food sacks as dresses. Surprisingly, the group included a large number of young men (in most African refugee populations, women and children far outnumber men). A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official explained that this was due in part to RENAMO's practice of primarily abducting women (who are used as cooks, porters, and for forced sex) and children (who are sometimes trained as fighters and forced to participate in RENAMO attacks).

Refugees who fled to South Africa are in the most precarious situation. UNHCR is barred from South Africa, and refugees there live in constant fear of deportation. We were not granted permission to enter South Africa to investigate the plight of Mozambican refugees in that country.

Recent Developments Will Affect Refugees

In recent months, there has been at least a small breakthrough in the Mozambican conflict. The Mozambican government and RENAMO

Benga returnee center, Tete province, Mozambique: this young woman and her family returned to Mozambique from Malawi in May. Her father said that they came back so that they could grow their own food. Even though security in many parts of Mozambique is still poor, and new refugees continue to flee, a significant number of them have returned--an estimated 40,000 to Tete province alone.

USCR/H. Ruiz

have communicated through mediators and, although they have not yet sat down face-to-face to talk about peace, they have taken steps in that direction. While it is far too early to predict what the outcome of that process may be, it is clear that, whatever the outcome, there will be serious implications for all concerned.

If the process breaks down, not only will Mozambique be further ravaged by the conflict, but countries of asylum may not be willing to continue hosting large refugee populations if they see no hope that the refugees will leave. Already, Mozambican refugees face a precarious security situation in South Africa and--to a lesser extent--Zimbabwe. But even in Malawi and Zambia, where they have received a warmer welcome, the mood could swiftly change if peace negotiations fail. According to one UN official in the region, Malawi cannot sustain the pressure of the refugees forever. If there is no solution to the conflict, he said, "There could eventually be pushbacks [of refugees] from Malawi into Mozambique."

Even if the talks succeed, however, and peace were to come to Mozambique, the sudden return of millions of refugees and displaced people to their home areas would create an emergency situation of unprecedented proportions, requiring a major international response.

A Returnee Emergency The returnees would be going back to towns and villages that have been utterly devastated. Their needs would be immense: food, water, health care, agricultural tools, seeds. The Mozambican government has begun to consider this eventuality. Jacinto Veloso, the Mozambican government's minister for cooperation, who is responsible for all programs of assistance to the country's displaced and returnee populations, told USCR: "The government will need to coordinate with UNHCR and host governments to try to plan people's return in order to reduce the negative effects which would ensue if they all returned suddenly." Veloso stressed that international assistance would be crucial when the refugees return home.

UNHCR is also preparing its response. It is drawing up plans for a series of reception centers through which the returnees would pass. Returnees would stay at the centers for 24 hours, receive an aid package consisting of one month's food rations, a tent, tools, and seeds--and then make their way home. The centers would remain open for anywhere from 9 days to 138 days, and process 1,000 to 2,500 returnees per day. The two largest centers would be expected to handle 155,000 and 230,000 returnees in 62 and 92 days respectively.

Getting much-needed assistance for the returnees may not be easy, however. UNHCR is experiencing a major funding crisis that is already affecting services to refugees around the world (see Refugee Reports, Vol. X, No. 6). In Malawi, for example, UNHCR says that "plans to replace highly inadequate medical facilities...have had to be cancelled," and "nutritional standards are likely to decline as a result."

Unless financial support for the agency increases significantly, UNHCR's funding crisis is likely to continue into coming years, which could have significant impact on the level of assistance that will be available to Mozambican returnees. Mozambican government officials also fear that "compassion-fatigued" donors may view a peace accord as the end of the problem and overlook post-war needs.

Projects and Programs

SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES IN UNITED STATES FACE MANY PROBLEMS, FIND LITTLE SUPPORT

"It is a bitter irony that while there is so much concern in the United States for the plight of black people in South Africa, there are South African refugees suffering in this very country," said Twiggs Xiphu, a South African refugee living in the United States.

The number of South African refugees resettled or who have been granted asylum in the United States is not large in comparison to other refugee groups, and they are not concentrated in any one community. When they face problems, many of them turn for help to the Washington-based, nonprofit African Research and Communications (ARC), one of the few organizations in the United States run by black South Africans.

ARC was set up in 1983 to promote education and training for black South Africans,

both in the United States and in South Africa. It works closely with educational institutions in South Africa, helps raise funds for black students and schools in that country, and assists South African refugees in the frontline states. In response to continued requests for help from individual South Africans throughout the United States, however, ARC staff began to provide information, referrals, and telephone counseling--and to document South African refugees' problems in this country.

"The problems are numerous," says Henry Isaacs, ARC's executive director. "They include homelessness, drug abuse, and mental health problems." ARC's findings are not new. In April 1987, Lynn Arditi reported for The Progressive that "in their isolation, many [South Africans] drink heavily.... Anxiety and depression [are] common complaints. Several suicides have claimed the lives of exiles during the last five years."

Isaacs says that while groups opposing apartheid get funding, "black South African refugees, who are the victims of apartheid, cannot get support to help themselves."

Isaacs would like to see a more comprehensive service delivery system to meet the needs of South African refugees. He is confident that there are individuals and agencies around the country who are willing to help. But, to design a service delivery program, Isaacs says research is needed on the numbers of South African refugees in the United States, their location, and their problems--all of which require funds.

Isaacs says that he and other South Africans here plan to continue their search for ways to help their fellow refugees, despite the difficulties they have encountered so far. For more information, contact African Research and Communications, Inc., 1710 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC, 20009. (202) 659-6466.

Resources

NEW FILM ON CAMBODIA AVAILABLE

"A darkness will settle on the people of Cambodia," goes a prophecy by Buddhist holy men. "There will be houses but no people in them, roads but no travellers upon them. The land will be ruled by barbarians with no religion. Blood will run so deep as to touch the belly of the elephant. Only the deaf and the mute will survive."

These words are recited in the opening frames of "Samsara", a new video on Cambodia, against a silent, slow-motion panorama of a Phnom Penh street crowded with pedicabs, buses, bicycles, and people. The message seems to be that Cambodia, wounded though it may be, has survived, or is at least "in passage from death to life," as one survivor puts it.

But "Samsara" is more meditation than message, drawing on the memories and stories of Cambodians in the United States and in Cambodia, to consider the people and the country today, after two decades in the glare and the shadow of war.

That "the world is suffering" is a basic Buddhist tenet. Likewise, "to meet a hateful man is suffering." During the four-year rule of the Khmer Rouge, the country saw little else but hate and suffering, as more than one million people died as a result of execution, starvation, disease, or overwork.

Now there is suffering of another kind: "How often in the market do we brush against those who tortured us?" says one woman. "Who among us has bloody hands, slipped quietly into life beside us? We are all in search of someone, the child lost, the husband lost."

The film offers a gentle, nonpolemic, but powerful account of the Cambodian past and present. As for the future, it suggests, more in prayer than in prophecy this time, that "blood can be turned into milk."

For more information on "Samsara", a 29 minute video produced and directed by Ellen Bruno, contact her at 171 Old La Honda Road, Woodside CA 94062. (415) 851-2398.

Reader Exchange

° Montefiore Medical Center has an opening for a social worker to provide culturally sensitive mental health care to Southeast Asian refugees in a primary care university-affiliated health center in the Bronx. Contact Clara Genetos, Assistant Director/ Social Service, Department of Psychiatry, Montefiore Medical Center, 111 East 210th St., Bronx, New York 10467. (212) 920-4239.

STATES WITH LARGEST SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS OF REFUGEE CHILDREN *

State	Refugee Children	Percent
California	25,859	33.2%
Florida	7,523	9.7
Massachusetts	4,922	6.3
Illinois	3,666	4.7
Texas	3,492	4.5
Washington	2,950	3.8
New York	2,667	3.4
Minnesota	2,459	3.2
Virginia	2,167	2.8
Pennsylvania	2,117	2.7
Rhode Island	1,798	2.3
New Jersey	1,686	2.2
Ohio	1,486	1.9
Michigan	1,452	1.9
All Others	13,610	17.4
TOTAL	77,854	100.0%

* Elementary school children are counted if they have been in the U.S. for less than two years; secondary school children if they have been in the U.S. for less than three years.

Source: State reports to the U.S. Department of Education (As of March 1988).

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